

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 021040Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6752

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 1828

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DEPT PASS AS APPROPRIATE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, CG, AO

SUBJECT: MOBUTU-NETO ACCOMMODATION: BACKGROUND AND
COMMENTARY ON THE COMMUNIQUE

REFERENCE: KINSHASA 1773

1. I MET WITH BISENGIMANA THE EVENING OF MARCH 1 AT HIS REQUEST TO GO OVER THE AGREEMENT STRUCK BETWEEN MOBUTU AND NETO IN BRAZZAVILLE ON FEBRUARY 28. FIRST OF ALL, BISENGIMANA MADE QUITE A POINT OF SAYING THAT THE MPLA HAD OBVIOUSLY WANTED AN ACCOMMODATION WITH ZAIRE VERY BADLY AND THAT THIS DESIRE HAD BEEN EVIDENT FROM THE EARLIEST CONTACTS. I INTERJECTED TO ASK WHOSE IDEA IT HAD BEEN TO GO PUBLIC WITH THE BRAZZAVILLE MEETING BETWEEN NETO AND MOBUTU, SINCE I HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS ZAIRE'S INTENTION TO KEEP THE MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO CHIEFS SECRET. BISENGIMANA LAUGHED AND SAID THAT THE MPLA HAD MANEUVERED THE PUBLICITY BY FIRST ANNOUNCING THAT NETO WAS GOING TO BRAZZAVILLE AND THEN BY NETO'S PRE-DEPARTURE STATEMENT THAT HE WOULD BE MEETING MOBUTU.

2. FACED WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI AND WITH WHAT THEY CONSIDERED TO BE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT THE MPLA WANTED AN ACCOMMODATION, THE ZAIRIANS DECIDED TO GO ALONG WITH PUBLICITY. A SECONDARY REASON, ACCORDING TO BISENGIMANA, WAS THAT

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NGOUABI WANTED A PUBLIC SHOW TO BOLSTER HIS OWN FALTERING

POSITION IN THE CONGO. IN ANY EVENT, BISENGIMANA AND NGUZA QUICKLY WROTE OUT A DRAFT JOINT COMMUNIQUE BEFORE THEY LEFT FOR BRAZZAVILLE WHICH ULTIMATELY SERVED AS THE FINAL PRESS COMMUNIQUE, WITH MINOR CHANGES. BISENGIMANA EMPHASIZED THAT THE ZAIRIANS HAD INSISTED ON THEIR DRAFT WHICH STUCK TO STRICTLY BI-LATERAL ISSUES AND REFUSED TO GO ALONG WITH MPLA SUGGESTIONS THAT THE US AND SOUTH AFRICA BE CONDEMNED OR THAT THERE BE REFERENCE TO THE CONTINUING LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN AFRICA. BISENGIMANA ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE ZAIRIAN SIDE HAD BEEN PREPARED TO HAVE MOBUTU AND NETO SIGN A JOINT COMMUNIQUE, BUT THE MPLA, IN ITS URGENCY TO GET SOMETHING OUT, HAD GONE ALONG WITH AN UNSIGNED COMMUNIQUE TO THE PRESS.

3. SO MUCH FOR THE LAST-MINUTE TACTICS. ON THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES, BISENGIMANA SAID THAT THERE WERE SEVERAL UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED WHICH WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY APPARENT FROM THE COMMUNIQUE. ON THE SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE, BISENGIMANA SAID THAT THE MPLA HAD CHANGED ITS TUNE SINCE THE LAST MEETING. THEY WERE WILLING TO GUARANTEE THAT THE SOVIETS/CUBANS WOULD NOT ATTACK ZAIRE AND THIS WAS REFLECTED IN THE COMMUNIQUE (POINT NO. 2). BUT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF THEIR EARLY DEPARTURE. IN THE FACE OF CONTINUED SOUTH AFRICAN PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA, THE CUBANS HAD TO STAY ON TO FIGHT THE RACIST AGGRESSOR.

4. I POINTED OUT THAT FROM WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME OF THE MPLA'S URGENT PUSH TO STRIKE A DEAL, IT SEEMED THAT NETO'S PREOCCUPATION WAS TO SECURE HIS NORTHERN AND EASTERN FRONTIERS SO THAT HE COULD SHIFT THE CUBANS AND THE SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO THE BATTLE AGAINST THE SOUTH AFRICANS. BISENGIMANA REPLIED THAT I WAS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT. IN FACT, HE SAID, THAT IS WHY NETO HAS AGREED TO WORK OUT A SPECIAL STATUS FOR CABINDA IN RESPONSE TO ZAIRE'S INSISTENCE ON THIS POINT. NETO NEEDS PEACE IN CABINDA TOO-- AND HE CAN'T EVEN TRUST NGOUABI'S INTENTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO THE ENCLAVE--SO HE CAN DEVOTE HIS ENTIRE ENERGIES TO THE SOUTHERN FRONT.

6. I THEN ASKED BISENGIMANA IF HE BELIEVED NETO AND THE
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CUBANS WOULD STOP AT THE NAMIBIAN BORDER IF THE SOUTH AFRICANS WITHDREW NOW. HE SAID HE WAS SURE THEY WOULDN'T. MAYBE FOR LONG ENOUGH TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR SUPPLY LINES, BUT SOONER RATHER THAN LATER THEY WOULD MOVE INTO NAMIBIA. BISENGIMANA BELIEVES THAT IF FOR NO OTHER REASON, NETO WILL SEND THE CUBANS INTO NAMIBIA TO "LEGITIMIZE" THEIR ORIGINAL INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA. DID THE MPLA SIDE SPEAK OF RHODESIA, I ASKED. YES. THE OVERALL INTENTION IS

CLEAR--USE THE SOVIET/CUBAN MILITARY BASES IN ANGOLA TO
PROSECUTE THE LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

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7. I ASKED IF ZAIRE HAD COMMENTED ON THE MPLA'S PLANS FOR THE CUBANS. BISENGIMANA SAID THEY HAD NOT. THEIR LINE HAD BEEN STRICTLY BI-LATERAL. HE REALIZED THAT BY AGREEING TO DE-MILITARIZE THE NORTHERN FRONTIER (HE MENTIONED THAT THE MPLA HAD ASKED FOR AND ZAIRE HAD AGREED TO MUTUAL TROOP WITHDRAWALS, LEAVING ONLY CUSTOMS OFFICIALS (POINT 5), FOREGO GUERRILLA BASES AND TO ACCOMMODATE ON CABINDA THAT ZAIRE HAD PLAYED INTO NETO'S LIBERATION HAND--BUT, HE SAID, "WE HAD NO OPTIONS. WE NEED PEACE AND THE CHANCE TO GET ON WITH THE SOLUTION OF OUR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS."

8. THEN HE WENT BACK OVER THE SUGGESTION HE HAD MADE EARLIER TO ME THAT THE ONLY WAY TO STOP THE SOVIET/CUBANS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WAS TO QUICKLY SET UP A BLACK GOVERNMENT IN NAMIBIA, A BUFFER STATE, AND TO PRESSURE SMITH INTO TURNING OVER THE REINS TO NKOMO. (KINSHASA 1544). IF THIS CAN BE DONE, HE SAID, THESE GOVERNMENTS CAN ASK FOR US AND AFRICAN HELP AGAINST THE CUBAN INVADER. ZAIRE WILL BE THE FIRST TO RESPOND, HE SAID. I WENT OVER THE POINTS IN STATE 2401 IN REPLY.

9. ON THE KATANGAN GENDARMES, (POINT NO 1 IN THE COMMUNIQUE) BISENGIMANA SAID THAT THOSE WHO DID NOT VOLUNTARILY RETURN TO ZAIRE WOULD BE TREATED AS REFUGEES--AND ALL REFUGEES AND REFUGEE CAMPS WILL BE AT LEAST 150 KMS FROM THE BORDER. THE UNHCR WILL

BE ASKED TO MONITOR KATANGAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA. DETAILS
WILL BE HAMMERED OUT IN THE JOINT
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COMMISSIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED. I ASSUMED THAT THE
SAME WAS TRUE FOR FNLA "REFUGEES" WHO DID NOT WISH TO
RETURN TO ANGOLA AND BISENGIMANA SAID I WAS RIGHT.

10. BENGUELA RAILROAD AND THE ZAIRE ESTUARY: AT FIRST
THE MPLA DID NOT WANT TO "GUARANTEE" (POINT 4) ZAIRE'S USE
OF THE RAILROAD AND UNIMPEDED ACCESS TO MATADI, PREFERRING
TO "COOPERATE," BUT BISENGIMANA AND NGUZA ARGUED INTER-
NATIONAL LAW AND THE MPLA FINALLY AGREED TO SUBMIT THE
TREATIES INVOLVED TO THE JOINT COMMISSION FOR RE-DRAFTING
TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION. THERE WAS NO REAL DISCUSSION
OF WHEN THE RAILROAD WOULD BE BACK INTO OPERATION
OR OF WHO WOULD PAY FOR IT. PERHAPS THAT TOO IS LEFT
TO THE JOINT COMMISSION.

11. REFUGEES: BISENGIMANA MADE THE POINT AGAIN THAT WHILE
NETO SAID HE WAS READY TO RECEIVE ALL ANGOLAN REFUGEES WHO
WANTED TO RETURN, HE SIMPLY DIDN'T HAVE THE MEANS
OR THE TIME TO ORGANIZE IT WHAT WITH THE WAR AGAINST THE
SOUTH AFRICANS GOING ON. THUS THE PROBLEM WAS RESOLVED
BY AN AGREEMENT TO ASK THE UNHCR (POINT ONE) TO HANDLE IT.
AGAIN THE JOINT COMMISSION HAS ITS WORK CUT OUT.

12. GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION (REMEMBER THAT ONE?):
BISENGIMANA SAID THAT NETO INDICATED HE WAS READY TO
RECEIVE HOLDEN AND SAVIMBI, BUT LARA HAD INTERJECTED
STRONGLY TO CARRY THE MPLA SIDE WITH THE ARGUMENT
THAT THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE IN VIEW OF THEIR
"TRAITOROUS" ACTIVITIES. THE ZAIRIANS WERE REDUCED TO
MAKING A PLEA FOR "REINTEGRATION" OF EX-FNLA/UNITA MEMBERS
(NETO INSISTED THAT THE FNLA,
UNITA AND FLEC WERE BANNED AS ORGANIZATIONS), INTO THE
GOVERNMENT AND THE ADMINISTRATION, RECALLING THAT ZAIRE
HAD OVER THE YEARS SHOWED THE WAY TO DO THIS WITH
ITS OWN DISSIDENTS. NETO AGREED AND
PROMISED THAT HE WOULD GUARANTEE THE SECURITY OF ANY
RETURNING FNLA/UNITA TYPES (LAST PARA POINT ONE).
SAME GOES FOR RETURNING KATANGAN GENDARMES.

13. I THEN SAID THAT IT SEEMED TO ME THAT ZAIRE HAD
PROMISED TO WITHDRAW SUPPORT FROM THE FNLA AND UNITA AND THAT
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GUERRILLA BASES WERE VERBOTEN (POINT 2). BISENGIMANA SAID
THAT WAS THE CASE. I ASKED ABOUT RUMORS IN TOWN THAT FNLA
AND UNITA OFFICES WERE ON THE VERGE OF BEING CLOSED
BY THE GOZ. HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS IN THE CARDS. I
ASKED IF FORMAL RECOGNITION WAS FAR AWAY. NOT VERY, HE
REPLIED. LASTLY, BISENGIMANA CONFIRMED THAT IT WAS NETO'S
INTENTION TO WORK OUT THE SAME "NORMALIZATION" PATTERN
WITH ZAMBIA AND SAID THAT ZAIRE WOULD
PROBABLY BE THE INTERMEDIARY.
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